

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 154 440

CS 502 066

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TITLE A Rhetoric of Ultimacy: Battle Orations.
PUB DATE Apr 78
NOTE 35p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Central States Speech Association (Chicago, Illinois, April 13-15, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.83 HC-\$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Chronicles; *Medieval Literature; *Persuasive Discourse; *Rhetorical Criticism; Social Values; *Speeches; *War

ABSTRACT

The rhetorical strategies of the speechmaker become more interesting as the involvement and risk assumed by the audience increase. Battle orations given by military leaders to their troops just before fighting the enemy provide the ultimate in audience involvement and risk. Of some 200 chronicles of northern Europe from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, 53 contain over 100 battle orations. When analyzed from the point of view of motives, specific arguments can be classified according to the appeal made to the fighting men: belief in the justice of the cause and the piety of the act; loyalty to the tradition of victory made by one's ancestors; assurance of victory because of one's strength; possibility of victory despite being outnumbered; martyrdom for Christ in preference to victory; vengeance for one's comrades, for oneself, or for God; the impossibility of recourse or escape; and the fact that one has come for the express purpose of this battle. Less frequently cited appeals include: defense of one's self, family, country; material gain; glory, a glorious death; and the display of valor and prowess. Analysis of speeches that do not fit this pattern, such as ones given over to enumerating the enemy's atrocities, reveals what may be close to authentic speeches rather than the formalized oratory of the chroniclers. (DS)

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A RHETORIC OF ULTIMACY: BATTLE ORATIONS

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A RHETORIC OF ULTIMACY: BATTLE ORATIONS

In most speeches, the speaker is asking his auditors for a commitment that really affects or involves them but minimally. So candidate X asks us to vote for him and against candidate Y. All involved know, no matter what is said, that the outcome will make little if any difference to the voter. Some speeches ask for greater involvement, and correspondingly greater risk, from the audience. A revolutionary agitator is asking for considerable involvement and risk from his audience. In many ways as the rhetorical situation becomes more extreme in this dimension, the rhetorical strategies employed become more interesting to the critic. It should therefore be of great interest to a critic to examine strategies in situations so extreme that they could perhaps be said to be on the outer limits of rhetoric. Luckily, history has provided us with an entire genre of speeches given in one of the most extreme of human situations, asking the audiences for the ultimate in personal involvement and risk. These are the battle orations, speeches given by military leaders to their troops to encourage them just before engaging the enemy. The problem can be simply stated: how can the rhetor so rouse his troops that they will fight to the utmost of their ability, and give up their lives if necessary? He is not asking them merely to believe in their cause, nor merely to accept the abstract possibility of some future danger.

He is asking them to kill and be killed now, this very day. Although the audience usually consisted of professional soldiers, even the mercenary or knight errant or barbarian warrior on the day of battle must face the ultimate, perhaps with greater clarity than the conscript. Since the situation is an extreme one, the rhetors' various strategies must be of great interest to the critic.

This paper, then, will attempt to isolate and analyze, from one historical period, rhetorical artifacts that comprise a genre. The setting is common to all the speeches, however much the conditions may vary. In each case, a battle is about to be fought. The commander or someone designated by him speaks to the army. He must use those lines of appeal he thinks strike at the core of his troops' motives. He must appeal to those values for which his troops are willing not only to fight, but to die. He must, indeed, use a rhetoric of ultimacy for that particular audience.

In generic criticism, one can focus on a number of characteristics of the genre under investigation, "factors" in apologetics,¹ "strategies" in argumentation,² and the like. In analyzing battle orations, it seems most fruitful to isolate the motives to which the speaker chooses to appeal. The rhetor does not have much latitude in selecting general approaches, but he certainly has a wide range of motives from which to select. Moreover, isolating "motives-appealed-to" will readily allow for comparison of one historical period with others. A change in period, as from the ancient world to the middle ages,

is a change in motives and should be clearly reflected in such an extreme rhetorical situation. But before a comparison can be made, and indeed before criticism proper can be done, the relevant speeches from different periods must be identified and characterized. This paper will focus on one such period.

This paper will analyze battle orations found in the chronicles of northern Europe from the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.³ There are several reasons for choosing that era. The current interest in medieval studies in this country helps draw our attention to that epoch in general. The twelfth century specifically is one of greatest interest to the historian of the west, for it was a decisive formative period. In 1100, the crusades had just begun. The Normans had established control of England and Sicily and were turning their enormous energies elsewhere. Europe was in every way expansive and expanding. Intellectual ferment was at the highest level, and the period deservedly was called by Charles Homer Haskins "the Renaissance of the Twelfth Century."⁴ Universities were in their formative stages. The classics, and especially Aristotle, were being translated and were stimulating Western thought anew. Rhetoric in its classic sense enjoyed great popularity not again duplicated until the Italian Renaissance. Historical writing was reborn, and not merely on classic patterns. The conjunction of renewed interest in rhetoric and history provides us with a large number of battle orations, from a wide variety of writers.

Thus we have a period of great intrinsic interest which

has provided us with a large number of artifacts for this study. Additionally, focusing on a remote period may be of advantage in a preliminary study such as this, for it avoids injecting into the critical process any of the controversy that surrounds modern generals, such as Patton or MacArthur.

Virtually all chronicles from the relevant period include accounts of battles, but not all include battle orations. However, some chronicles were still rather close to the form of simple annals. These but seldom contain discourse of any type. Of the lengthier, more detailed, chronicles and histories, almost all contain speeches of various kinds; about half contain battle orations. The longer and more detailed the chronicle, the greater the likelihood that it will contain battle orations. Of some 200 chronicles from the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, 53 contain battle orations or descriptions of them. Over 100 speeches provide the material for this analysis.

All types of historians wrote battle orations: monks, bishops, archdeacons, canons, knights, priests. Literary training did not seem to make much difference in their propensity to include battle orations. Henry of Huntingdon and Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote elaborate speeches for battle scenes, but William of Malmesbury did not, and Matthew Paris did so only rarely, and these are mostly borrowed from earlier writers. Even relatively uneducated but literate knights--such as the author of the Gesta Francorum--and priests--such as the author of the De Expugnacione Lyxbonensi--wrote such speeches.

Often the chroniclers do not attribute any specific speech

to their characters, but rather describe a speech that was supposedly given. The boundary between describing a speech, and presenting the oration itself is not a clear one. A detailed description and a speech in the classical mode of indirect discourse can be difficult if not impossible to distinguish. However, most descriptions offer few details and are clearly only descriptions.

The procedure used in analyzing the speeches for lines of appeal was not an a priori one. Were more of the topics in the standard twelfth century textbooks, De Inventione and the Rhetorica ad Herennium, applicable to this type of speaking, it would have been possible to search for arguments falling into those pre-existing categories. But battle orations are not forensic speeches, and few of the topics overlap classes. However, when analyzed from the point of view of motives, the appeals naturally fall into several categories. Specific arguments from the speeches can then be classified accordingly. Only the speeches themselves were used, and not descriptions of speeches, as the latter normally do not indicate in what way an appeal was developed. If they had been used, they would not have altered the proportions among appeals.

Some of the topics appear frequently; some occur but seldom. However, the numbers in each category only give an indication of the frequency with which an appeal occurs, not the extent to which it is developed. Often a small portion of a speech must be classified in two or three categories, as different arguments are clearly implied or mentioned. Other appeals are

extensively developed along one line only. In general, classifiable appeals occur most often in the longer speeches, less often proportionately in the shorter ones. The very short speeches are quite often situation bound and therefore unique.

We will take the different appeals in order of their frequency. The most frequent concerns the value of the cause for which the army is about to fight. This takes several forms. Normally the speaker claims that "our cause is just," or "we are acting in a pious manner," while the enemy's cause is unjust or they are acting in an impious manner. The comparison is not always explicit, but any claim that we are about to fight for justice surely implies that the enemy is the representative of injustice in the coming struggle. Nearly one-fifth of the speeches contain this appeal.

A clear example is found in a speech in Aelred of Rievaulx's Genealogia Regum Anglorum. King Alfred addressed his army. About half-way through the speech the argument appears:

We are Christians fighting against pagans, pious against the impious; against the haughty we fight with contrite heart and humble spirit. And consider for what reason we fight. They have destroyed churches, torn down altars, they have spared people neither because of age nor rank nor even sex. Furthermore, we do not seek gain from them, but we demand our own be returned. They have taken our possessions from us, they keep them, consume them luxuriously, even use them in sacrifices for their idols.⁵

Aelred also uses this appeal extensively in his Relatio de Standardo. He details the horrible things the Scots have done to people and churches, and concludes that the northern barons are fighting a just war when compared with their enemies.⁶ No

other speech discovered contains such a gory description of the enemies' actions.

Giraldus Cambrensis presents a speech in which the two sides are compared on several counts, referring to the evil designs of the enemy. The comparison becomes direct toward the end of the oration.

We, on our side, have humility against pride, right and equity against injustice, moderation against arrogance . . . Law and right allows us to repel force and injury by force. It is a favourable cause to contend at once for our country and our inheritance.⁷

William the Breton, describing the Battle of Bouvines, claims that Philip Augustus used this appeal extensively.

Philip spoke as follows:

King Otto and his army are excommunicate by the Lord Pope, because they are enemies and destroyers of things of the holy church, and the money which is supplied for their pay is won from the tears of the poor and the robbing of the churches of God and the clerks. But we are Christians, and we enjoy the communion and the peace of the holy church, and, even though we are sinners, yet we submit to the Church of God and we defend the liberties of the clergy with all our strength.⁸

Here the entire argument is drawn out very clearly.

As common as the preceding appeal is the claim that we and/or our ancestors have always been victorious in battle. This can be presented very briefly, merely mentioning the fact, or it can be drawn out at great length, enumerating past successes. The tradition of victory must have been of considerable importance, judging by the number of times the chroniclers use it as an appeal.

Aelred of Rievaulx uses this argument in his Relatio de

Standardo, but in a slightly different manner than any other chronicler. The speaker asks, "Why should we despair of victory when victory has been given to our people as if in fief by the Highest?"⁹ Then follows a typical enumeration, partly in the form of a long rhetorical question, of the past successes of their ancestors, with some of their own victories interspersed. But the concept of possessing victory, holding it from God, was found only in this speech.

Henry of Huntingdon often uses this type of appeal. In his speech attributed to Julius Caesar, it is given prominence.

Invincible fellow soldiers, who have braved the perils of the sea and the toils of marches and battles by land, and have been daunted neither by the fierce onset of the Gauls, nor the resolute courage of the German nations, think not that I suppose any words of mine can add to that disciplined courage which is already perfect, and which, tried in so many fields, can neither be added to nor diminished: that valour, I say, which has always shone brightest when danger was greatest, and, while others have despaired, has led you exultingly onward to certain victory. I need not recall to your minds what is fixed in your own memories, and in those of all nations, how often, seemingly conquered, we have conquered our conquerors; and, not disheartened by our disasters, have become braver than the brave by whom we have been repulsed.¹⁰

In his account of William's speech before the Battle of Hastings, Henry makes much of the fact that the Normans have never once been conquered in battle. In fact, almost the entire speech is an enumeration of the victories of the Normans' ancestors, followed by an enumeration of the successes of those now going to fight Harold.¹¹ In the speech before the Battle of the Standard, Henry uses in the first place a reference to past successes, although not enumerating so many nor in such

detail as in William's speech.¹²

As a final example, Guibert of Nogent begins a battle oration with this appeal. "So far you have waged a war of faith against treachery, and you have had successful results from all decisive battles."¹³

An argument almost as common as the preceding two is the simple claim that the army should enter the fight sure of victory for they are stronger, or more numerous, or better armed, or occupy a better position than the adversary; that is, they enjoy some sort of military advantage.

Aelred of Rievaulx, in the Relatio de Standardo, refers to the Scots as inadequately armed, both defensively and offensively. They are not armored, exposing their flesh to the English swords. For the attack they have only a fragile spear. He does not include, as does Henry of Huntingdon,¹⁴ the reverse side of this appeal, claiming that the English are very well armed and protected. Further, his second part of the argument is by refutation. Apparently the Scots' spears were quite long and had the English worried. The speaker attempts to dispel this fear.¹⁵

In the Expugnatio Hibernica Giraldus Cambrensis uses such an appeal in several speeches. In one, the speaker argues that his army should attack now, while the invaders are still few in numbers.

As these foreigners have come over few in numbers, let us crush them by a general attack. Fire, while it only sparkles, may be speedily quenched; but when it has burst into a flame, being fed with fresh materials, its power increases with their bulk, and it cannot be easily extinguished. It is always best

to meet difficulties half-way, and check the first approaches of disease; for,

Too late is medicine, after long delay
To stop the lingering course of slow decay.¹⁶

This particular speech also includes two relatively unusual devices. Most obvious is the verse, taken from Ovid. Quoting classical poetry was quite unusual in battle orations. It was discovered in only five speeches. The other unusual practice is the use of an analogy that compares the situation the army faced with something other than another military situation.

Elsewhere Giraldus presents the comparison in a rhetorical question. "Since, then . . . we are not only brave, but well armed, can it be supposed that an unarmed multitude and mere rabble are able to resist us?"¹⁷

While the claim that they have some natural military advantage approaches the persuasive problem from a purely secular point of view, the same general argument was also used from a supernatural point of view. Often the speaker claims that, for one reason or another, his army will obtain heavenly aid in this battle, undoubtedly a considerable military advantage.

There is in Aelred's account of the speech before the Battle of the Standard a detailed and extensive claim of this type. Walter Espec says that Michael and the angels, Peter and the Apostles, the holy martyrs, and indeed Christ Himself will be fighting with them against their barbarous enemies.¹⁸ This is the longest and most detailed example that was discovered.

Simeon of Durham describes a vision in which Saint Cuthbert

appeared to King Alfred, which the king related to a select number of his troops the next day to animate them for battle. In the vision, Cuthbert promised that, "through the gift of God and the aid of St. Cuthbert they would conquer their enemies and obtain the land they inherited by right."¹⁹

William the Breton portrays Philip Augustus using this argument before the Battle of Bouvines. Philip claims they are going to battle as defenders of the Church. "We ought faithfully to trust that by the mercy of God which is granted to sinners, He will give us a victory over His enemies and ours."²⁰

Robert the Monk depicts a speech to an army of Crusaders. "Your Lord brought Oriental riches before you, even into your hands. You should be comforted, and be prudent men, because now the Lord will send legions of his saints, who will avenge you of your enemies."²¹ The speaker then warns the army not to fear the advent of these heavenly legions, although they will look strange and make lots of noise.

Another common argument is for the speaker to tell his troops that they can conquer the enemy even though they are outnumbered. There are at least two possible explanations for its frequent appearance. Maybe a medieval army often had to confront an enemy that greatly outnumbered it. Or, perhaps this is an artifice to enhance the reputation of a duke or army. The appeal can take different forms. It can be claimed that if they show sufficient bravery and valor they will beat the multitudes of the enemy. It can also be claimed that what they need is piety and God's help, and with those, will defeat the

enemy. Often a combination argument is used, not relying solely on secular or divine actions for victory.

In the Relatio de Standardo Walter Espec argues that although the Scots are numerous, victory depends not on numbers but on God and a just cause. Add to that the superiority of the English armor and weapons, and the Scots cannot win. He concludes that the greater the numbers of the Scots, the greater will be the English glory when they are beaten.²²

Alberic of Aix attaches this appeal to the claim that God will aid them. The speaker concludes that it is easy for God to have few beat a multitude.²³

The Gesta Consulum Andegavorum describes a situation in which the specific rhetorical problem the count faced was to get his men to fight against a multitude. The men first spoke to him: "How are so few of us able to fight against such a multitude, such strength? And we are tired today!" To which the count replied, "It is easy for many to be beaten by the hands of a few, and it makes no difference in the sight of the God of heaven whether he frees a large number or a small, since victory in a war depends not on the multitude of the army but on the strength of heaven."²⁴

The treatise on the crusade attributed to Ralph of Coggeshall uses this appeal. The Master of the Templars says, "Know in truth that your fathers were victors everywhere not so much by their numbers or their excellent weapons, as by faith and justice and by following the commands of God, since it is not difficult to conquer either with many or with few when the

victory is from heaven." In the speech immediately following, the Master of the Hospitallers recalls the victory of Abraham with only three hundred slaves over four kings.²⁵

Another appeal that seems to have been relatively popular particularly in the accounts of the battles of the crusaders, is the request that the army fight and die or conquer for Christ. The speakers often extend the argument, claiming that either outcome is good, and some draw the conclusion that it is preferable to die for Christ, to become a martyr. Sometimes the speaker takes as support Romans xiv, 8: "whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's." This was found in speeches by Fulcher of Chartres,²⁶ Lisiard,²⁷ and Alberic of Aix.²⁸

Alberic uses this argument on several occasions. As most fully developed by him, it appears at the end of a speech.

If, however, we are destined to die and to be worn down, let us have faith and hope, since, if we will permit our bodies to be killed now in the present age for the name of Jesus and holy Jerusalem, we will be able to save our spirits in the future, in eternal life together with our brothers who were murdered for Christ in yesterday's battle.²⁹

The priest's sermon before the walls of Lisbon also includes this appeal, developed to the furthest conclusion.

Under this ensign, if only you falter not, you shall conquer. Because, if it should happen that anyone signed with this cross should die, we do not believe that life has been taken from him, for we have no doubt that he is changed into something better. Here, therefore, to live is glory, and to die is gain.³⁰

Of relatively frequent occurrence is the demand for vengeance. The leader is portrayed asking his men to avenge the

deaths of their comrades, or to make sure that their own deaths are avenged in advance, and sometimes even to take vengeance for God.

Balderic of Dol includes this appeal, using an argument *a fortiori*.

I say, if some foreigner shall kill any of your fathers or sons or brothers or grandsons: will you not avenge your blood? By much more ought you to avenge your God, your Father, your brother whom you see blamed, outlawed, crucified; whom you hear crying and forsaken and begging for aid: "I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me."³¹

A Scriptural citation (Isaiah lxiii, 3) in a battle oration, while not unique, is yet rather rare.

Ordericus Vitalis includes a speech by the king to the army of crusaders at Joppa in 1102, which seems built around the appeal for revenge. The speaker begins by claiming that the enemy are hateful to God and all Christian men, and enemies of goodness.

Let us put on our armour that we may take vengeance in the name of God, and sally out to meet our friends who are marching to our aid, and strong in the faith give the enemy battle under God's protection. Reflect in your inmost souls on the wrongs and losses you have sustained, and let the aliens feel the weight of your arms in full vigour.³²

Then follows a list of the nobles the enemy has carried off.

"Let your fresh grief at the loss of your friends inflame your rage and sharpen your swords for the destruction of the enemy."³³

William of Tyre, too, presents a speech in which the appeal for revenge is strong. The crusaders have received word that another Christian army has just been beaten badly by the infidel.

The duke explains this to his army and turns immediately to ask for revenge.

I perceive that nothing remains for us, illustrious men, but to avenge the great injury done to our Lord Jesus Christ or to die with them. Believe me, neither life nor safety is preferable to death or any kind of suffering, if the blood of these great lords has been poured forth upon the earth in vain, if so terrible a slaughter of people dedicated to God does not meet with a swift vengeance.³⁴

Again at the end of the speech, he asks the Christians to fight, remembering the injuries inflicted upon them.

One of the more interesting appeals is the frequent reminder to the troops that they cannot escape by flight. Such an argument, of course, is more situation bound than many others. Yet it appears quite frequently. Apparently it was a very real possibility that the army might turn and flee, and was not considered degrading to the army for the historian to insert such a statement in his chronicle. Perhaps the commander had, in some cases at least, purposely chosen a location from which escape was impossible to make his men fight more valiantly.

The normal situation appears in Benedict of Peterborough's chronicle, in a speech before the battle at Breteuil. "Moreover, there is one thing, bravest nobles; that I want to stress firmly: that turning back as fugitives is in no way possible. For we are so surrounded from all sides by our enemies that since there is no hope of flight, this alone remains, that we conquer or we fall."³⁵ How strange the juxtaposition seems of "bravest nobles" followed by an appeal not to flee!

In the Gesta Consulum Andegavorum the warning is presented

very briefly. "Of flight let no one ever think, for Anjou is very far from us."³⁶ Similar statements, that flight will not save you because your homeland is far away, appear in several of the shorter speeches as well.

Ralph of Coggeshall presents a speech in which the danger asserted in flight is quite different. The speaker ends his exhortation: "But if any of you hesitate for fear, and give the enemy an opening among us, or if I see anyone fleeing anywhere, I swear by Almighty God, I will with one swift blow cut off his head!"³⁷ This was the only instance of such a threat that was found.

Matthew Paris presents a slightly different approach to this argument. The French king is exhorting his troops, and says that they must stand and fight now, for although they have the possibility of retreat, if they do so the enemy will not only exult, but will pursue them and will soon destroy them from the face of the earth, which will also be bad for Christianity, the Church will be ruined and France will be disgraced.³⁸ This was the only case discovered in which the argument focused on other than the immediate future.

Another line of appeal that occurs with relatively great frequency, especially in the chronicles of the crusades, reminds the army that they have come for the express purpose of this battle. Alberic begins a speech with this claim. "Remember in whose name you left your native land and your family, and in what manner you renounced earthly life, fearing no danger to go to death for Christ."³⁹

Balderic does the same. The speaker points out that it is now time for the battle. "For this you left your country, for this you have come here: you have always wanted war. Behold what you have desired and prayed for so long."⁴⁰

Lisiard begins a speech this way. "Hey, knights of Christ, you see that for which, from such far countries, you have sought, through many great perils on land and on sea; you have come by your free choice to offer your spirits for Christ; you have found that for which you have come. Let no one refuse by cowardice that holy self-sacrifice he sought and at last has found."⁴¹

Another appeal concerns defense. The speaker asks the soldiers to fight valiantly to defend themselves, their families, their country or king. Interestingly enough, this motive was not used nearly as often as one might expect, but was still relatively frequent.

The most bizarre example of a speech based on this appeal is found in Geoffrey of Monmouth's British History. The British invaded Ireland for the purpose of bringing back the huge stones of the Giant's Dance (now known as Stonehenge.) The Irish king urges his soldiers to fight:

No wonder a cowardly race of people were able to make so great a devastation in the island of Britain, when the Britons are such brutes and fools. Was ever the like folly heard of? What are the stones of Ireland better than those of Britain, that our kingdom must be put to this disturbance for them? To arms, soldiers, and defend your country; while I have life they shall not take from us the least stone of the Giant's Dance.⁴²

Helmold combines this appeal with one for pride. The speaker first justifies his recent actions, and then says, "I

shall, however, feel easier if your will is in accord with mine, if you stand with me, a sworn band, in the defense of the fatherland. For in this place both the shame of flight and the most certain destruction of our fatherland demand recourse to battle."⁴³

Matthew Paris puts such an argument into the mouth of the Soldan in 1250. The Saracen first argues that they have already beaten half the French army, and this other half will be easy. Then he asks, "For what rash madness excites them to attack and endeavour to deprive us of our inheritance, who have inhabited this noble country since the Flood?"⁴⁴ It is extremely rare to find a battle oration attributed to one who is clearly an enemy.

There is here a clear break in the frequency with which appeals occur. From the most frequent, in one-fifth of the speeches, to this point, differences in frequency have been slight. The appeal to defend the homeland occurs in just over one-tenth of the speeches. From this point, however, the remaining topics occur in only three or four speeches at the most. A couple of these nevertheless merit consideration.

One that occurs a few times urges the soldiers to fight in the hopes of material gain. The Gesta Francorum reports that the knights at the battle of Dorylaeum encouraged each other by passing a secret message along their line, one that illustrates the curious mixture of piety and hope for worldly gain that motivated the crusaders. "Stand fast all together, trusting in Christ and in the victory of the Holy Cross. Today, please God,

you will all gain much booty."⁴⁵ And Richard, canon of Holy Trinity, reports that King Richard once established a price list of rewards in besieging a town: four aurei for each stone displaced from the wall, two aurei for overthrowing a petraria, etc.⁴⁶ King Arthur, urging his men to defeat Lucius Tiberius, ended his exhortation with the promise of riches:

You shall want no rewards of honour, if as faithful soldiers you do but strictly obey my commands. For as soon as we have routed them, we will march straight to Rome, and take it; and then all the gold, silver, palaces, towers, towns, cities, and other riches of the vanquished shall be yours.⁴⁷

Another series of arguments that appears a few times centers around the concepts that it is good to obtain glory, and since one has to die sometime, a glorious death would be desirable. The most elaborately developed example was written by Giraldus Cambrensis. He even includes a philosophical dissertation on death. The speech is attributed to Robert FitzStephen, who exhorts his followers to fight valiantly to restore the Irish prince to his throne.

If the victory be won by our prowess, and Mac Murchard be restored, and the realm of Ireland be secured by our enterprise for us and our heirs for ever, how great will be our glory, how worthy of being achieved even by the loss of life and the contempt of death.

For what is death, but a momentary interval of time, a brief delay, and, as it were, a short sleep between this fleeting life and that which is enduring? What is death but a short passage from things transitory to things eternal? We must all die, because that is the inevitable and common fate of mankind; and though no splendid or glorious actions may have made us illustrious during life, by our deaths, at least, we may make our names memorable in future ages. Death is only to be feared by those who when they die appear as though all had perished with them; but it has no terror for such as have gained honour which can never fall into oblivion. Wherefore, ye valiant men,

whose renown is already known to fame, let us strive to shew this day that our race has not degenerated, but in this conflict, either by victory or death, gain immortal fame as the reward of your valour.⁴⁸

Normally, however, the argument only appears in partial form. For example, in Helmold's account, the Saxons wished only for a glorious death. For them, the glory itself was sufficient reward.⁴⁹

In a similar vein is the argument that the troops should show their valor, for it will be seen. Ordericus has the leaders exhorting their troops, "On the plain which is the field of battle this day, each man's valour and prowess will be distinctly seen."⁵⁰ The extreme development of this motive appears in the chronicle of Richard of Holy Trinity. He describes a crusading army that became so impressed with its own valor that, as King Guy set out to attack the Saracens in 1189, some of the army said, "What power shall prevail, what multitude shall withstand us? Let the Lord assist neither us nor our adversaries; the victory rests in our own valour."⁵¹ This sentiment, naturally, Richard severely criticizes.

Over all, however, the concept of valor seems to have been used seldom as a separate motive, although it frequently appears as a term supporting other arguments and appeals. While more appeals were based on the concept of glory, in general the same could be said of it: it is a supporting term where it normally appears, not a separate line of appeal.

Most of the short speeches are simply brief presentations of arguments already considered. However, there are quite a few

that are unique. Several examples will be given here to provide some idea of the range these speeches cover.

Unique appeals based on the desire for booty appear in two speeches. At the battle of Jerusalem, as the walls had just been breached, Count Raymond spoke to his own men: "Why do you delay here? Don't you see the Franks, having obtained the city, are now celebrating, taking the best of the spoils?"⁵² The opposite problem appears in a speech in Alberic's chronicle. The commander has to say, "O rebellious and incorrigible men, who bewitched you, so that your hands are turned to prohibited and unlawful booty just when your enemies, by God's aid, have succumbed to the sword? Come on, put down the booty, and pursue the enemy, and do not now leave future insurgents who will seek for bitter revenge against you."⁵³

A line of appeal unique to its situation also appears in a speech written by Geoffrey of Monmouth:

Since we have begun this fight without Arthur's knowledge, we must take care that we be not defeated in the enterprise. For if we should, we shall both very much endanger our men, and incur the king's high displeasure. Rouse up your courage, and follow me through the Roman squadrons, that with the favour of good fortune we may either kill or take Petreius prisoner.⁵⁴

Finally, note must be taken of something that occurs quite frequently but is not a true line of appeal or argument. Often the exhortations end with the promise that whoever falls in the battle is absolved from his sins. Presumably, if one knew he could die in such a state, he might be more prepared to risk his life. However, never was such a claim developed explicitly,

although many times absolution was given.

Some battle orations are based on only one appeal. Many of the shorter ones contain only one topic, some longer ones use different appeals to support one dominant one. But of all the writers, three stand out as including in their speeches far more lines of appeal than any other chroniclers: Aelred, Henry of Huntingdon, and William of Poitiers. Six orations by these chroniclers contain a large number of the total available commonplaces. Moreover, they contain most of the appeals fully developed, not just mentioned in passing.

On the basis of the appeals discovered in this study, perhaps a few generalizations can be made about what motivated men to fight in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, but first the value of the evidence must be considered. These speeches are probably the product of the chroniclers rather than reports of real speeches given to real armies. Nevertheless, they may be taken as trustworthy evidence here. Several of the chroniclers were themselves knights; most, of course, were clerics, but many of them had close contacts with the fighting classes. Even those chroniclers who were monks had often come from prominent families and had close relatives who were knights. All the chroniclers had some opportunity to learn about the motivation of twelfth century fighting men, and many had intimate knowledge of it.

With this in mind, several points stand out from the battle orations. The first is the extent to which the chroniclers thought it necessary, and quite proper, to warn the troops that

they will not be able to escape by fleeing. We must assume that such was a very real possibility. There are, indeed, several outstanding instances of the knights fleeing, as the Normans at the Battle of Hastings or the Christians at the Battle of Dorylaeum. Furthermore, it does not seem that the chroniclers, even those closely connected with the armies, thought it degrading to the troops to write later that they had to be so warned. The sense of preservation must often have outweighed the sense of honor in battle.

Since the comparison of the relative values of the two sides' causes was so frequent an argument, we must assume that it had special importance for the medieval army. Presumably, this is always an important argument, for the troops must think they are fighting for some worthy cause against some evil enemy.

It was also somewhat surprising to find appeals to win glory, or to show valor to the whole world, so infrequently. Perhaps these were not the knights of literature, who take every opportunity to demonstrate their valor, especially to the ladies. Yet the terms, "glory" and "valor," appear quite frequently in the course of other appeals. These two seem rather to be appeals that were implicit, and, as part of the climate of opinion, so to speak, did not often get developed as detailed arguments. The terms were invoked and that was sufficient.

The argument to defend yourselves and your families and country also occurs relatively infrequently. This is because so many of the chronicles and so many of the speeches either relate to the crusades or were written by someone from an invading army.

So we have several speeches by William before the Battle of Hastings, but none by Harold. Despite its infrequency, therefore, this should not be taken to be an unimportant motive.

Also of interest is the frequency of the topic that we or our ancestors have always been victorious. Apparently the tradition of valiant men at arms was an important one, which, to preserve intact, would motivate men to risk their lives.

The assurance that we will get aid from heaven, of course, depends ultimately on the claim that we are fighting a just war. Two things, however, stand out about this appeal. First, it is sometimes promised that such divine aid will be forthcoming. No indication is given that anyone ever would have doubted such a promise. Second, the argument often is approached not as a promise but as an appeal to hope for divine aid. The hope itself was perceived as efficacious.

Often the speaker claims that though the enemy outnumbered us, victory depends on valor or justice or something like that and not on mere multitudes. The speaker clearly is trying to shift the concern from quantity to quality. Insofar as the army really was much smaller than the enemy, the appeal is perfectly straightforward. Often, however, this is probably merely a means for the chronicler to embellish his account of the army.

The argument that one should die for Christ or conquer for Him appears, naturally, most often in the crusades. The benefits from dying for Christ clearly suppose a concept of martyrdom that would be accepted by the troops.

The request for vengeance on the enemy is also interesting.

Sometimes it brings to mind the barbaric blood feud, as when the chronicler asks the army to require the blood of their brothers from the enemy, or when the speaker asks who, if a near relative is killed, will not require vengeance on his murderer. These motive forces were still operative. They appear most often in Helmold's chronicle. Perhaps in the eastern marches this motive was even a dominant one. Sometimes it has been absorbed into religion, as when the army is asked to avenge the injuries done to Christ, or when they are told that they are God's agents in taking vengeance for Him. (A strange twisting of Christian doctrine, but hardly one unique to the twelfth century!)

Analyzing battle orations for appeals gives us a general picture of the motivations of the armies of twelfth and early thirteenth century Europe. But the categories, when applied back to specific speeches, may be useful in yet another way. They may help us in considering the authenticity of the few speeches which do not seem to fit into the categories. The battle oration seems to be reasonably well defined, a fairly formalized type of speech. With allowance for variations in situations, which the chroniclers naturally had to take into account, for the most part the speeches seem very similar. There are, however, three exceptions that stand out and call for more consideration.

The speech Aelred of Rievaulx wrote in his description of the Battle of the Standard in some respects does not fit the normal pattern. Two particulars are notable: the many gory

details presented, and the hatred of the enemy it portrays. Aelred was not attempting to prove his rhetorical ability, not even being very interested in the liberal arts, so we must assume that he was not simply trying to write the harshest invective possible. Furthermore, Henry of Huntingdon also states that the Scots committed the same sort of atrocities. As Aelred was closely connected with both sides in the conflict, it seems probable that he was indeed accurately reporting, if not Walter Espec's exact words, at least the sentiments of the northern English barons. Powicke's explanation that the English and the Scots fought each other with no unusual ill will but that the English were very upset at King David's use of barbaric Picts and Gallowegians,⁵⁵ does not seem to explain all the facts. Why, then, does Aelred write of the atrocities of the Scots? It may be, as Henry of Huntingdon says, that David caused his followers to commit these atrocities.⁵⁶ Perhaps it was just a very barbarous region, and not solely because of the presence of Picts and men of Galloway. Further research might be able to solve this problem. At any rate, Aelred's speech is not formalized like most battle orations. Indeed, the entire speech seems much more personal than others. Given Aelred's position at the time of the conflict, and his lack of interest in formal rhetoric, this speech may well be close to one actually delivered at the battle.

A second speech that does not fit the pattern appears in the Expugnatio Hibernica by Giraldus Cambrensis. An English army was about to fight the Thomond people. Duvenald or Donnell, the

prince of Ossory, who was an enemy of the Thomonds, spoke to the English army which was spirited but small in size.

Brave soldiers, and conquerors of this island, we must this day manfully attack the enemy; for if your wonted valour is victorious in the onset, the Irish battle-axes will second your swords in following up their defeat with effect. But if we find your ranks give way, which God forbid, it may chance that, in conjunction with the enemy, they will be turned against you. Look well, therefore, men, to yourselves; there are no strongholds near us, we are far from any place of refuge. It is our custom to side with the winning party, and to fall on those who run away. Trust to us therefore; but only while you are conquerors.⁵⁷

Now, Giraldus was an accomplished rhetorician. He studied the subject in Paris and made something of a name for himself by teaching it. It is most unlikely that any leader would have given such a speech as this. It starts out like a perfectly ordinary battle oration, but ends up characterizing the Irish as fickle allies. Giraldus' purpose in including this speech must have been to characterize the Irish, rather than to report on a speech actually given.

A third speech that does not fit the general pattern is the long sermon in the De Expugnatione Lyxbonensi. It was preached by a priest before the final attack on the walls of Lisbon by the crusaders. The first part is an appeal to the soldiers to repent and be reconciled with God, for God has brought them safely to Lisbon and will aid them if they confess truly all their sins. Toward the end of the speech, it turns into a more normal exhortation before battle. The priest tells them the enemy will not be able to stand against them, that God has been strengthening their patience by not allowing them to take the

city thus far. He assures them the enemy are weak and robbers and that, under the standard of the Cross they will conquer if they do not falter. If they die in the battle, that is far the better. Then the priest announces that he himself will accompany the army in the attack, bearing the relics, and that St. Paul prays for them. He ends with an appeal for God to help them.

This sermon is the only such speech discovered. It is by far the longest battle oration. There must have been some good reason for this particular chronicler to include such an extended speech. It is also the only speech in the form of a sermon. Several sermons given prior to battles were described, but this is the only one that appears in full. And the final portion, where the speaker approaches the form of the normal battle oration, seems weak as an exhortation to valor when compared with the normal speech. Add to this the fact that the chronicle was apparently written by a literate but unlearned priest who accompanied the crusade. The material suggests, as David concludes, that the sermon was probably given by the author himself, although, he adds, "it is difficult to adduce any positive evidence in its support."⁵⁸ David drew his conclusion from the appearance of the manuscripts and the evidence surrounding them and the author of the chronicle. The comparison of this speech with other battle orations adds support to his thesis.

We have examined a genre of speeches from one historical period, analyzing them for the motives to which they appeal. We have as a result a general concept of the central motives of the fighting class at that time.

A study such as this opens many intriguing issues which merit investigations of their own. One was pursued briefly here: the potential for authenticating speeches that do not fit the normal pattern. This potential should be explored by examining other periods as well, and perhaps by using other kinds of analysis, stylistic, for instance.

Several other questions also should be pursued. Above it was suggested that perhaps the frequent warnings not to flee indicate that the knight of history, even rhetorical histories, was not the knight of romances. The battle orations from chronicles could be compared to similar speeches from twelfth century literature, in an attempt to answer the question. Motives in battle orations also could be compared from several different periods of history. In what ways do motives in such an extreme situation in the twentieth century differ from those in, say, the Roman Republic? One could, indeed, in the end trace the development of these motives throughout recorded history. This study, in other words, invites additional investigations.

NOTES

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